

U.S. Congress Passes Legislation Encouraging Closer Partnership with Somaliland

Historic Precedent Achieved in Further Strengthening U.S.-Somaliland Ties as National Defense Authorization Act Set to Become Law

WASHINGTON, DC (December 15, 2022) – In a historic first, the U.S. Congress has approved legislation calling for a stronger security partnership between the U.S. and Somaliland. The Republic of Somaliland applauds this precedent-setting directive, which was included in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2023 and approved by the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives. Once signed into law by President Joseph Biden, this provision will become the first reference to Somaliland codified in U.S. law since Somaliland reasserted its independence in 1991.

The NDAA requires the secretaries of State and Defense, as well as the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, to regularly update Congress on efforts by the U.S. government to deepen defense, diplomatic, and development ties with Somaliland. This reporting must include the agencies' staffing and responsibilities related to the provision of foreign assistance, diplomatic engagement, and security partnership initiatives with Somaliland. It also requires the Secretaries of State and Defense to study the feasibility of greater collaboration with Somaliland and its contribution to U.S. national security interests in the Horn of Africa, Gulf of Aden, and Indo-Pacific region.

This provision originated as an amendment offered by Representative Chris Smith (R-NJ) that, along with report guidance proposed by Representative Marc Veasey (D-TX), was included in the House-approved NDAA in July. It also draws from the [Somaliland Partnership Act](#) (S.3861), which was introduced by Senators Jim Risch (R-ID), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), and Mike Rounds (R-SD) earlier this year and approved by the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee in June.

Somaliland's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development, Essa Abdirahme Kayd, said, "Passage of this legislation is another important step forward in many years of diligent engagement between our two governments. Somaliland is proud to serve as a beacon for stability in the Horn of Africa and the strengthened partnership envisioned by Congress will advance our pursuit of shared strategic interests in a critical region. Somaliland is grateful to our partners in the U.S. Congress for their continued support for an enhanced partnership between Somaliland and the United States."

"This is a great day for Somaliland and for our expanding relationship with the United States," said Bashir Goth, Somaliland's Representative to the United States. "The U.S. has always had a ready and capable partner in Somaliland, and the pursuit of closer collaboration is grounded in our shared values, including our tradition of one-person one-vote democracy, governance by the rule of law, and track record of economic self-reliance. This action represents a historic step forward and signifies resilient bipartisan support for enhancing the U.S.-Somaliland relationship. We look forward to President Biden signing this important legislation into law and our work together to implement it."

This amendment follows determined efforts to strengthen relations between Somaliland and the United States this year. In March, Somaliland President Muse Bihi Abdi conducted a diplomatic visit to Washington during which he met with Members of Congress and officials from the White House, State Department, Defense Department and other agencies. Following these consultations, General Stephen Townsend, then-Commander of the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), and U.S. Ambassador Larry André visited Somaliland, where they toured the Port of Berbera and the Berbera International Airport after meeting with President Bihi and members of his cabinet.

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